The Lost Daughter by BellaLehua

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Summary: "She died...I saw her die! Ho-wha-why is she alive?" Suddenly overcome by emotion Hop falls to his knees, tears streaming down his face, his shoulders shaking, "I will never let her go, not again."

1. Who Are You?

Rushed footsteps thumped onto the ground, foot after foot, breath taken away before it was taken in. A shrieking of a monster not far behind, hunting. The girl's heart was pounding, though she didn't feel fear, she didn't feel anything. She just needed to survive. She focused on getting out, finding a new world, friends a family. Blood poured out from her eyes and nose, though she ignored it, working harder and harder to survive, running faster and faster. Her head split, she felt a thousand knives stab into her temples, but she powered through. Only one thing caused her to keep going, she needed her family. Then she saw it, her way out. Not looking back she jumped through the goop, pushing her way through, thin strands of the sticky web-like structure stuck to her body, covering her in a liquid with the thickness of mucus. It was thick, really thick, she wasn't sure if she would make it through, but the monster was behind her. She needed to get out, now. With one last push, she fell out the other side. She was out, she was safe, she was free. She knew she should be crying, she should be happy, but she didn't feel it. All she felt was cold and empty.

It didn't matter, she got out, it had been eight years. Eight years she'd been stuck alone. Eight years since she had taken a shower. Eight years since she'd eaten a real cooked meal. Eight years since she had had a family. Wiping the mucus off her as best she could, she evaluated her surroundings. It looked like she was in a forest, huge tall trees, and they were colors. Not just the deep blackish blue she was used to, but brown and the tops were green.

A bird chirps.

She whips around, expecting to see the monster she was running from, but instead found an owl. Perched on a branch, it's wise eyes looking into her soul. She didn't like the way it looked at her.

Go away.

The owl lifted its wings and flew away from her, she eased up. Looking down she found that she was standing on a path. All paths lead to civilization eventually. So she followed the path, keeping her

eyes on the path and everywhere else, she had to be ready for anything. Soon she found herself in front of a house, it was a big house, it had a pool in the backyard. But more importantly, there was a road. Roads meant civilization and she now knew where she was. She had walked this road before, not this road exactly, but another version of it. Then something struck her, she knew where he was. She couldn't walk anymore, weak as she was she had to get to him. So she ran , as fast as she possible could. Straight down this street, then she turned right, then left and then straight until she was at the police station.

People were staring at her, it was a small town. Everyone knew everyone and no one knew her. She was dirty, her dirty blonde hair was caked in mucus, dirt and anything else she had picked up in the last eight years. It was a tangled mess and it reached passed her ankles. She hadn't cut it in eight years, so naturally it grew to a horribly long length. Even worse she was wearing the same outfit for eight years. A hospital gown, no longer white with blue flowers, it was ripped in strange places and short, coming to the middle of her thigh. Caked in the same things as her hair and barely covering herself. The worst thing about her, she was thin. Not a normal thin, a dangerous thin, her cheek bones and collar bones protruded from her skin. Her legs were strong and muscly, but thin. She looked as if she were starving herself while working out all at the same time. Not to mention the dried blood coming from her nose and eyes.

Mother hid their children from her, covering their eyes and whispering to other adults. She ignored them, they were unimportant, she needed to get to him.

You're unfazed, it's another normal day. You don't notice the girl running down the street.

She didn't know how many people she affected, but soon most of the people on the street lost interest in her. In fact they didn't even notice her, except for one boy. She didn't get a good look at him. All she saw was wild brown hair and then he was gone-or she was gone. She was in front of the station. It was happening, she would see him , she would be with him. Eight years since he had hugged her. Eight years since he had read her a story, sang her a song, brought her to the playground….given her her stuffed tiger. She was sure she would be

crying if she could feel anymore.

Taking in a deep breath, she pushed open the station door and walked in. Wide eyed she took everything in. The old faded yellow on the walls, the smell of coffee and cigarettes.

"Can I help you, dear?" An older women with wide rimmed glasses and smelled of mildew asked her. She had heard that the women was named Flo and took care of him. After a long pause Flo turned to the chief, "Hop I think you need to take this one."

She turned to see where Flo was talking, sitting at a desk was a balding middle aged man, he wore a wide rimmed hat and had a chief's uniform. He sighed and rolled his eyes when Flo called him, but got up.

"Flo what is it this time? And I don't want to be hearing about-whoa." Hop's mouth dropped when he saw her, his eyes nearly popping out of her head. "Excuse me, are you ok kid? Who are you?"

She just looked up at Hop, evaluating him, deciding if it really was him even though she knew it was. "Who are you?" She asked in such a monotone, apathetic tone.

Hopper was taken aback, surprised by her tone, "I'm the chief, Jim Hopper. Who are you?"

She looked up at him, straight in the eyes, "Sarah Hopper."

2. The Hospital

Hop didn't get time to react. The second after Sarah shared her name, her eyes rolled back into her head and she passed out. Hop rushed to catch her, but was too late. Her head hit the floor with a loud smack.

"Flo!" Hop yelled, "I'm taking this girl to the hospital!"

Flo just nodded, "Mmhmm."

` Hop scooped Sarah into his arms and ran out the door, dropping her omto the backseat of his truck he rushed her to the hospital. Busting the door open he yelled for doctor. Soon a swarm of doctors took the girl from his arms, rushing her to a room they were connecting her to an IV line and started filling her up with fluids. A rush of deja vu filled Hop. Hearing the doctor termanology, the beeping of her heart monitor, the alcoholic hospital smell. Hop reached for chair suddenly feeling dizzy. Memories of his daughter filled his head. He remembered the day in the park when she started breathing weird, her hair-loss due to the chemo, they day she died. Died...she's dead, Sarah's dead, he watched her die. His baby girl is dead, they had a funeral, she's buried in the ground...but no she's here. Why is she here? How is she her? Hop's head split, a piercing headache took over, he rubbed his temples, trying to make sense of everything that had happened, all before his lunch break.

"Excuse me?" A doctor interrupted his thought, "Sir? Excuse me."

Hop looked up at the doctor, the bright hospital lights made him into a silhouette, like and angel. "What?"

"The girl you brought in, is she your daughter?" the doctor asked.

Hop squinted, "What? Oh, no, yes, I don't know."

"You don't...know?"

"She said she was my daughter then passed out, ok doc? I don't know if she really is or just a confused girl. I haven't seen my daughter in nine years."

The doctor nodded, "We can run a DNA test to make sure, and will you assume guardianship until we find her parents?"

Hop barely heard the doctor, "Yeah, sure. Um, I need to make a call and get a coffee."

The receptionist will let you use the phone and we have a coffee maker in the waiting room."

"Thanks." Hop grunted.

Joyce stood over the pot of grey soup. Something went wrong, yet she didn't know what. She thought she had done everything the recipe said, apparently not.

¨Jonathan! We're having pizza again, make sure Will comes home on time!¨

¨Ok!¨ Jonathan called back from his room.

Joyce grabbed her keys right as the phone rang, sighing she put her keys down. ¨What is it now?" she picked up the phone to hear the shaky voice of Hop, "Hop? Is something wrong?"

"Joyce, I need you to come to the hospital right now."

Joyce's eyes widened, "What happened?"

"Its...I don't know, just get down here."

The phone hung up.

"Jonathan! I'm going to the hospital, get Will from Mike's house."

Jonathan ran into the kitchen, "Are you ok?"

"Yes, I'm fine, but Hopper wants me to come down. I don't know why, he seems upset. I don't know what time I'll be home." Joyce grabbed her keys and left the house.

Jonathan runs out of his house, his mother took the car, but he needs to get to Will. Mike's house is on the other side of the town, but it's a

small town. If he sprints the whole way Jonathan could probably get there in fifteen minutes. That's what he intends to do.

Reaching the house Jonathan pounded on the door a little bit too hard, but it didn't matter. Mrs. Wheeler answered while he was still trying to catch his breath.

"Oh, hi Jonathan! Do you need Nancy? I could-"

"No," gasp, "I need Will."

"Oh, well he's just downstairs."

Gasp, "Thank you."

Jonathan rushed downstairs, there he found Will, Mike, Dustin, Lucas, Eleven and Max. The boys and Max were playing their Dungeons and Dragons game while Eleven held Mike's hand and silently observed.

"Will." Jonathan said interrupting the game, "We need to go."

Will checked the clock on the wall, "Mom said I could stay until one thirty."

"I know, but mom left for the hospital," Jonathan lifted his hand to stop Will, "Don't worry mom's fine. It's Hop."

Eleven's eyes widened, "What happened to him?"

"I don't know, my mom wouldn't say."

"Well let's go!" Will said standing up, the rest of his friends joining.

"Whoa, what are the rest of you doing?" Jonathan asked.

"Coming with you to the hospital." Mike said.

"No, no, Will and I are going home."

"I've got a car, let's go." Nancy walked downstairs.

"Nancy…" Jonathan complained.

"Jonathan, something is wrong with Hop, we're not staying here. Done, let's go." Nancy threw Jonathan the keys and lead the kids out the door. "Mom Jonathan and I are taking the kids out to visit Hop at the hospital!"

"What'd she say Ted!" Mrs. Wheeler yelled.

"She's going out with Jonathan." Mr. Wheeler said dryly.

Nancy rolled her eyes, "Let's just go."

The children piled in a car to small to fit them all, but no one cared. Jonathan hopped into the driver's seat and speed the group over to the hospital. How he got swamped babysitting six kids with his girlfriend, he had no idea. Then again, he didn't have an explanation for most things that happened in Hawkins.

They pulled into the hospital parking lot and hopped out. Rushing into the hospital all eight of them crowded the receptionists desk.

"We need to see Jim Hopper." Nancy said.

"Kids?"

The kids turned around to find Hopper standing behind them with Joyce, completely fine and healthy.

"Hop?" Jonathan exclaimed, "What-I thought...mom?"

"Jonathan what are you doing here?" Joyce asked slightly angry.

"We heard that Hop was in the hospital,"Will explained, "We wanted to come check on him."

Hop sighed, "I'm fine. A girl came to the station earlier today and I admitted her to the hospital."

"Who is it?" Dustin asked.

"No one you'd know," Joyce said, "She's…" Joyce looked up at Hop.

Hop stared at the ground, "She claims she's my daughter."

Everyone's jaws dropped and eyes widened.

"Daughter?" Eleven asked, "Sarah?"

Hop nodded.

"I thought you said his daughter died…" Max said to Lucas.

"I did."

"We don't know if she is," Joyce said, "The doctors are running a DNA test and the girl is still out. She's severely malnourished and well...she's not doing to good."

"How long has she been out?" Mike asked.

"Two hours, maybe three?" Hop was pale, he looked like he would faint himself.

Nancy walked up and rubbed his back, "Hop I know this must be scary, and if it is Sarah, wouldn't that be...good?"

"It would be wonderful, but you had to have seen her. She's so thin and dirty, she was wearing a hospital gown and her hair came passed her ankles, and she was covered in that...that goo." Hop stared at the floor.

"Goo?"

"Upside down." Eleven said, "Upside down goo."

Hop nodded.

Will's eyes widened, "You don't think…"

"I don't know what to think." It was all Hop said.

"Mr. Hopper?" A doctor came up to Hop.

Hop nearly jumped out of his seat, "Yes? Is she-can I-"

The doctor raised a hand to stop Hop from talking, "Yes, she woke up, but she's groggy and out of it. You and Joyce can go in, but the

rest will have to wait outside."

"Thank you." Hop said, "Um, do you know…?"

"Tests are still being ran."

Hopper nodded, then he and Joyce heading into the girls waiting room.

Sarah 's eyes lingered open, her vision blurred. Where was she? This isn't the station, it was somewhere new. The walls, the lights, the sounds, it was all familiar. Her heart monitor, it brought back memories, bad memories. Her father was reading her a book, she was holding her tiger, she was fine. Not fine, but ok. She had cancer, her head was completely rid of hair, she was always tired and achey, but she was alive. Then one day something happened. She got knew doctors, they were mean doctors. They kicked her parents out of the room, telling them that she was in trouble, they were going to try and save her. But they didn't, they put her to sleep, she tried to fight it, she tried to yell to stop them, to get her parents, it didn't work. Just before she passed out she heard something awful, something completely horrible and blood curdling. Her heart monitor flatlined. Even as a four year old she knew what that meant, death. Did she die? She couldn't tell, she didn't have time to tell.

A door opened, Sarah turned her head, it hurt too much, she was too weak.

"Hello," The doctor said in a soft sing-song voice, "Someone's here to see you."

Hop stepped to the side of Sarah's bed, he was pale, was he sick too? No, he was scared, she was dead, now she's not.

"Hey kid." He said in a soft voice, "How are you holding up?"

Sarah's throat felt like sandpaper, "Alive." there was no emotion in her voice, she sounded like she didn't care, she didn't mean to, but…

Hopper looked at the ground, "Would you like me to leave?"

Sarah shook her head, "No, I'm sorry I just don't...It's complicated."

she was apathetic again.

Hopper nodded, "Who are you kid?"

"I told you I'm Sarah Hopper, I'm your daughter."

"My daughter died when she was four years old."

Sarah shook her head, "Friends don't lie? Right? That applies to daughters as well."

"How do you know about that?"

"I've seen you, all of you. I've been watching."

"From where?"

Sarah didn't reply, he was asking her a lot and she was tired and weak, really weak.

"I'm tired."

Hopper nodded, "Can I ask one last thing?"

Sarah nodded.

"Why do you talk like you don't care? Like you don't feel a thing."

Sarah hesitated and pursed her lips, "I don't feel anymore. I don't remember when, but that place ruined me. All I feel is empty and cold. I'm sorry, I know what I'm supposed to feel and I don't feel it."

Hop looked at the doctor, Dr. Johnson nodded, "We can run some tests on that too."

Joyce stepped forward, she reached for Sarah's hand, Sarah recoiled at the touch. It was warm, her skin was soft, it was strange. She hadn't felt that in so long. Sarah reached her hand back, letting Joyce grab it. "Hello dear," She had a soft sweet voice, just like she had heard from the upside down.

"Joyce." Sarah said, "Will's mom."

Joyce's eyes widened, but she nodded, "Yes, how did you know?"

"I watched you."

"From where you were hiding?"

Sarah nodded.

Joyce smiled, stroking Sarah's dirty hair out of the way, "You're a very strong girl. I'm so proud of you, you've been through so much."

Sarah nodded again, "I saw Will, I helped him."

Joyce's brow furrowed, "Helped him?"

Before Sarah could say more she was wracked with coughs. Joyce grabbed her a glass of water and handed it to her, helping her drink. "Rest dear, we'll talk later."

A door opened, "Mr. Hopper?" It was a new doctor, "Can speak with you for a moment? Your results have come in."

"Yes of course. Watch her, Joyce?"

Joyce bobbed her head, "She's not going anywhere."

Hopper left the room with the doctor leaving Sarah and Joyce alone.

"Does he really not believe me?" Sarah asked.

Joyce frowned, "You've been gone for a long time dear. Hop has a had a hard time getting over your death. It's a big shock."

"Do you believe me?"

Joyce rubbed her thumb over Sarah's forehead, "I think you should get some rest."

The door opened again, Hop walked back inside, pale as snow. Joyce took a deep breath and squeezed Sarah's hand. "What's the answer?"

Hop walked over to Sarah, her eyes were closed, she was still awake, but she was tired. He reached over and rubbed her free hand, "She's

my girl."

3. Over and Out

Joyce placed a hand over her mouth, Sarah squeezed Hop's hand, hard.

"Told you so."

Hop smiled and rubbed Sarah's hand, "Seems so. You have some visitors, would you mind if they came in?"

Sarah nodded, then closed her eyes, she was still weak.

"I'll get them." Joyce said. She walked out the door to find the group of kids eagerly waiting by the door. Mike was trying to find a gap in the drawn curtains of Sarah's room and lucas was trying to listen through the door. When Joyce walked out the boys stumbled back trying to act as casual as possible while Dustin, Max and Eleven tried to stifle their laughter, Steve seemed to have joined them while they were waiting and was trying to hush the kids. Joyce just rolled her eyes, "Goodness, patience clearly isn't one of your qualities. She's awake and ready to be visited, but!" Joyce stopped the younger of the group from jumping out of their seats, "She is Hopper's thought to be dead daughter, but she is very tired and very weak. Do not ask too many questions and be calm and gentle with her. Also she talks kind of...strange, she shows no emotion and claims not to feel emotion. Don't question it, ok?"

They nodded

"Alright, let's go in."

The group walked in hesitantly. Not sure what to expect. Steve lead the group, Dustin close behind and Nancy and Jonathan took the back. They filled the room, circling around Sarah's bed. Sarah recognized each face so well, she knew all of their stories, all about their lives. Yet none of them knew a thing about her. They all eyed her with and equal curiosity and hesitation. She closed her eyes again, it took too much energy to keep them open for long.

She felt warm skin touch her wrist, her eyes jerked open, but she

didn't move. It was Eleven. Eleven turned Sarah's wrist over, revealing a muddy patch, she tried to keep a mark on her skin hidden.

"What are you hiding?" Eleven asked quietly.

Sarah reached up and pointed at Eleven tattoo, which was being covered by a bracelet. "Same thing as you."

Eleven nodded, "What number?"

Twelve.

Eleven's head popped up, "Who said that?" Everyone looked at her, dumbstruck, El looked back at Sarah, "Oh." Sarah nodded. Eleven backed up from the bed, they found another. Unfortunately it had to be Hopper's daughter.

"Eleven." Sarah said, straining her voice, "Sister."

Eleven smiled and lifted up her wrist, "Sister."

Sarah shook her head, "No, my father...adopted you. Sister."

Eleven's smile widened, "Sister."

"How did you know that he adopted her?" Mike asked.

"I saw you."

"How?"

"I-" Sarah couldn't speak anymore, she was too tired.

"Hey chill out Mike." Steve said, "She's really weak right now."

Dustin, who had been silent this whole time, unusual for him, watch Sarah. In a slightly, memorized, way. He noticed her her first, it was the longest, dirtiest, most tangled hair he had ever seen. And yet, it still held a beautiful dirty blonde, golden look. Next he noticed her size, she looked strong, when she moved, every muscle in her body flexed, she must have done a lot of hard work where she was, but she

was thin. Not a healthy thin, she looked so thin it was hard to believe that she had any muscle. She looked like she would break like a china doll if she would try to stand.

Joyce was right though, she did talk weird. She didn't have any emotions, not in her face or her voice. It almost seemed as is she just didn't care, but even less. Dustin expected at least a tear after she was talking to El, but nothing. El seemed to understand though, and after she had checked Sarah's wrist. Dustin expected that Brenner had something to do with this. Maybe Sarah was one of the eleven.

No one had spoken in two minutes, it was killing Dustin. He walked up to Sarah and moved some of her hair out of her face, "You've never heard of a shower I see." Her face scrunched, she didn't understand. Dustin immediately felt bad, "It was a joke." He mumbled.

Sarah looked more confused, "A joke?"

Dustin looked awestruck, she didn't know what a joke was! "Yeah, you know, something to laugh at. Something funny."

"Oh." Sarah was still confused, but something felt strange inside her. Almost like a spark, she didn't feel yet it was a new sensation. Not quite a feeling, but maybe close. Maybe she could feel again, one day, maybe.

The doctor interrupted what might've happened next, "Alright, visiting hours are over. Hop you can stay with your daughter, but she needs to rest. Everyone else must leave."

"I'll take El home until Sarah is dispatched." Joyce said, as she started gathering everybody out.

"Thanks." was all Hop could muster to say.

The whole ride home and for the rest of the day Dustin was eerily silent. The boys asked im if he wanted to come over to Mike's to play a game, but he declined. Instead he rushed to his house, ignored his mother's failed attempts to say hello and locked himself in his room. Mrs. Henderson said she heard Dustin muttering to himself about

money and she heard him scrummaging through his closet. She was admittedly worried, but she also knew that whatever he was doing couldn't cause too much harm.

Soon Lucas, Mike and Will got a call from Dustin.

Calling everyone, I need you to come down to my house IMMEDIATELY, bring any money you have. HURRY! Over.

Mike was the first to answer, *What, why? Over.*

Just get over here! Over.

Lucas joined, *Dude, what's going on? Why would we come-*

Oh give me that! It was Max, *Yes Dustin, we'll come. Over.*

Hold up, Mike, *Max what are you doing with Lucas...in his room?*

Are you...making out? Over. Dustin

You could hear Max's eyes roll through, *hey Mike what was Eleven doing in your basement forever? And I can bet anything she's with you right now. Over.*

I am, Eleven.

Eleven! Mike whined through the walkie talkie.

Ha I knew it! Max exclaimed triumphantly.

Ugh, whatever, you guys are gross. Will joined, *Dustin when do you want us? Over.*

Now! Over and Out.

4. Her Gift

Dustin knew that Sarah needed clothes, and he knew Hop knew the last thing about dressing well. So he decided to take matters into his own hands...with the help of Steve, of course. After about fifteen minutes everyone arrived to Dustin's house and he told them his plan.

"You want us to spend all our money on clothes and school supplies for this girl that just came back to life…?" Mike asked.

"Not all your money, just a good amount of it." Dustin said, "And c'mon it's the christmas season and if we let Hop shop for her she might as well wear a mini sherif outfit everyday just like him."

Mike rolled his eyes, "Dustin this is-"

"A wonderful idea, let's go right now." Eleven interrupted.

"El!"

Eleven turned to Mike, "She's my sister and I am going to help her. Will you?"

Mike sighed, "Fine, let's go."

Dustin looked up at Steve for approval, he nodded. Piling into Steve's car, the six kids by themselves exceeded the limit, his car only held five. Good thing they were all tiny, Mike, Eleven, Lucas and Max sat in the back, Dustin and Will in passenger and Steve in driver's seat.

"Ok buckle up, I don't want any of you dying today so safety first." Steve said in a motherly way, "Alright where to first?"

The boys looked at each other suddenly realizing that they didn't know how to shop for girls and Max and Eleven were even more clueless. Max grew up on hand-me-downs and Eleven wears whatever she can find in Hop's closets and whatever Nancy gives her.

"The mall?" Dustin suggested.

Steve nodded, "The mall it is."

As they pulled up to the mall Dustin realized that he had no idea what stores to go to, he didn't even know the names of clothing stores, his mother always did his shopping. Luckily for them, It appeared that Steve knew just where to go and apparently knew what would fit Sarah just from what he remembered her looking like.

In the end they ended up getting more than expected. A couple of high waisted jeans,black, navy blue and white wash, they were baggy, but tightened at the ankles and waist, a pair of overalls, a couple tight and loose turtlenecks of various colors and at least seven sweaters. One was completely pink, one was plain white, one was striped with many different colors, deep greens, reds, blues, blacks, etc, another sweater looked more like a baggy dress shirt, white button-up and red stripes going up and down, one was jean, one was knit and tan, and the last one, Dustin's personal favorite was white with a rainbow stripe across the chest and arms. They also got a couple t-shirts, but not many, it was too cold and the bought her a coat along with a zip-up sweater for indoors. Lastly they got a pair of blue high top converse and white Adidas with black stripes.

The whole trip Max and Eleven would comment on a few items they liked and Lucas and Mike would silently take note. Sometimes they'd even stay behind and ask Steve for some help. When they returned they didn't seem to have purchased anything and it was hard to tell if Steve had more bags than when he entered because they had boughten so much for Sarah.

At the end of the day Steve bought the kids some cheap mall food and then drove them home. Before Dustin, Mike and Lucas went into their homes with their bags, Steve told them he would help wrap their stuff in the morning.

Dustin had to carefully sneak through his house with his loaded bags as to not wake his mom. He did not want to explain the many girls clothes he had. It was a simple answer, Christmas time charity, but it was still a very awkward conversation.

The next morning Steve woke the boys up early. Apparently they had "a lot of work to do." Lucas, Mike and Dustin didn't understand how hard wrapping a present could be, but apparently you had to get boxes, bags, ribbons, bows, tissue paper and a million different types

wrapping paper. Then on top of everything there were specific ways to wrap different packages. It happened to take them all the way to lunch to finish wrapping. By that time the boys vowed to never buy another Christmas gift again, it was absolutely not worth it.

After lunch everybody went to visit Sarah again, she would be discharged from the hospital three days before Christmas. Hop invited everybody over to his trailer, but then realized that it couldn't hold everyone. Luckily for him Mrs. Wheeler said they could all come over at 9:00 to open present and then back over at 6:00 for dinner. Of course the kids were allowed to stay downstairs to hang out if they wanted.

"What will I do when the break is over?" Sarah rarely spoke, this is one of those rare times.

Hop thought for a moment, the kids would be in school and the adults would be at work, "Well maybe you could stay with me at the department."

Sarah shook her head, "I want to go to school."

Hop frowned, "I'm afraid you're a bit behind kid."

"I've gone to school every day I could in the Upside Down, I know everything. I just need practice."

"Oh I don't know-"

Ms. Henderson interrupted Hop, "Dustin is an excellent student! I'm sure he'd love to tutor Sarah before the break."

Hop looked at Eleven and the other kids, "If Sarah goes to school do you promise to include her? And take care of her?"

They nodded.

"Dad I'm not a baby, just because I can't feel anything it doesn't mean I need extra help."

Hop rubbed Sarah's forehead, "I know kid, I'm just looking out for you."

"Did the doctor ever say why I can't feel?"

Hop shook his head, "He said that you could be a sociopath but it's highly unlikely, you don't show most of the symptoms. He also believes you can get your feelings back."

Something sparked inside of Sarah, a new hope, I hope so.

Hop looked around the room, "What was that?" looking around the room you could see that everyone else was confused as well. They heard something, a voice, but no one had spoken. It sounded something like Sarah, but it was full of emotion.

"That was me." Sarah said.

Everyone stared at her, how, did she do that?

"Gift." Eleven said, eyes wide, "Her gift."

Sarah nodded, "I can speak through mind, read minds."

"But you had emotion." Will said.

"I know, my mind's voice never lost emotion, I don't know why."

"What did Brenner make you do?" Hop asked.

Sarah looked at the hospital sheets, pearly white with little violet flowers, "He made me talk to the Russians, or spy on people, make them do things."

"Do things?" Lucas asked.

"I'm like a conscience, I can make people do what I want."

"How-" Mike was cut short.

You want to jump, really high, a pattern, two legs, one leg, don't stop.

Mike started jumping, first on two legs, then one, into a pattern. He didn't stop, "What's going on?"

Stop.

Mike stopped.

"I can make you do whatever I want. That's what Brenner made me do to people."

5. Tutoring

Sarah was finally discharged from the hospital just a couple days later, though she still had to have often check ups and a special diet so she could start gaining healthy weight. Hop's trailer was small, nothing like her home in the city, but it was still home. There was a small living room connected to the kitchen, one bathroom and two bedrooms. Sarah and Eleven shared a room, it was tiny, only big enough for a small closet and a bunk bed, which was all they needed.

"Welcome home!" Hop said slightly anticlimactically, "I know it's not great but we survive. You and El will share a room, the bathroom is right over there and my room is right next to yours. Um, El and I haven't really gone shopping recently, but you can wear whatever is in the closet."

Sarah looked over at Eleven who just shrugged.

"Everyday after lunch Dustin will tutor you so you can start school after break and either Joyce or Mrs. Wheeler will pick you both up at nine each morning to take care of you two while I'm at work."

Eleven rolled her eyes, "He treats us like we're two."

"El," Hop warned, "I'm just trying to protect you."

"Mhm, I'm gonna help Sarah get settled, and hopefully find something that will semi fit."

Eleven grabbed Sarah's arm and pulled her into their room. "Don't worry, Hop is just a little worked up. I mean, you were dead for nine years."

Sarah nodded, "I'll be fine, I just wish my emotions would come back."

"They will, don't worry."

"I'm going to go to bed, goodnight."

"Goodnight."

Thank you.

Eleven smiled she liked speaking to Sarah through their minds, hearing her voice with emotion was relieving, it reminded her that Sarah did feel. Even if she didn't recognize it.

You're welcome.

The next morning Sarah woke up with the rising sun, her blinds were open, it was the first sunrise she had witnessed in nine years. Her blinds were always shut in the hospital. It was unnerving for her, yet she found herself unable to look away. It was beautiful. She stared at it all until it was far after over. Sarah hadn't realized how much she had missed since she got stuck in the Upside Down.

"Good morning."

Sarah jumped, her head hit the top of her bunk. "I didn't know you were awake."

"Did I scare you?"

"No, just surprised."

Eleven looked a little deflated at Sarah's response.

"I'm sorry, I still don't feel anything."

Eleven just nodded, "Let's go get some breakfast, Joyce will be her in two hours and you need to shower."

Sarah smelled herself, it was bad and her hair was still knotted and ratty, "I should be embarrassed shouldn't I?"

"It's ok."

The two went into the kitchen and Eleven pulled a box of eggos from the freezer and started to heat them up. As they cooked she grabbed three plates, forks, butter knives, syrup and butter.

"Those are the eggos you love so much." Sarah said.

Eleven looked at the toaster, "They are, you saw that from the Upside Down?"

Sarah nodded, "I hope they're good."

"They're the best."

The eggos popped out of the toaster and Eleven plated them. She taught Sarah how to butter them and pour just enough syrup. Sarah rushed through the eggos, they weren't her favorite, but they were better than eating Upside Down slime.

"Look who's awake." Hop walked into the kitchen and sat at the table, scarfing down his eggos."How did you girls sleep?"

"Fine." Eleven said.

"I saw a sunrise." Sarah said, "It was beautiful, I'm sure that it would make me happy if I could feel."

Hop smiled sadly, "Sunrises were your favorite when you were younger."

Sarah sighed, "I think I'm going to take a shower."

Eleven got up, "I need to tell you what to use."

Eleven pointed out which soaps were conditioner, shampoo, and body wash and Eleven told her which order to use them. Once Eleven left the bathroom Sarah turned on the shower. As the water reached her desired temperature, she stepped into the shower. Allowing the water to penetrate her skin. She started washing her hair as quickly as possible. Filling her hand with mounds of shampoo, lathering it into her hair, pulling out every bit of dirt and grime she could. Then she moved onto conditioner. Pulling and ripping at the knots and tangles, after what felt like ages, she was able to brush her hands through her hair as if it weren't even there. Her dirty blonde hair, thought it still reached her ankles, felt so much lighter now that it was clean. From then on the wash was easily, the warm water had rinsed off most of the grime from her body, but she new bacteria still covered her. She scrubbed as hard as she could until her skin was pink and raw, but it felt clean. Sarah felt the most clean than she had

in years.

Stepping out of the shower Sarah went to her room, in the closet there were many oversized shirts, and no other pants. She frowned, grabbing a random shirt, she put it on. It reached past her knees, the sleeves reached far past her hands, it would have to do.

There was a knock on the door, Sarah peeked her head out, it was Joyce. Sarah slowly stepped out.

"Oh hello dear." Joyce said pleasantly. "Hmm, I see you don't have a great wardrobe." Joyce gave Hopper a disapproving look, "I'm sure I have something in my closet you can wear."

"Hm, yes, well I have to get to work. I'll see you girls later."

"Bye Hop."

"Bye Dad."

Hop pushed passed Joyce and the girls and harshly drove away in his truck.

"Is he ok" Sarah asked.

"Oh, he's still a bit shocked about everything, you know, he thought you were dead this whole time. It takes some adjusting." Joyce explained.

Sarah just nodded, she seemed to do a lot of that, it was the closest thing to feelings she could get besides speaking through her head. They arrived to the Byers house and Sarah found out that it was only just bigger than her home. Though it felt much bigger when she got inside.

The first thing Joyce did when she got inside was get Sarah some new clothes. She grabbed her smallest sweater that she had, it fit rather largely on Sarah and she grabbed a pair of small jeans that fit Sarah with a belt.

She made the girls breakfast and Will hung out with them while they waited for everyone else to arrive. For most of the day the kids just

sat around a table and played games. Sarah didn't join, she just observed and learned how to play from watching. The game was called Dungeons and Dragons, Sarah had seen them play it from the Upside Down but lost interest because it took so long. Now she learned that they all had characters that represented themselves, each character had their own powers and they worked together to defeat a monster or win something. Sarah only said few words the whole day and when she did she whispered them. Almost like she didn't want to get in trouble. Joyce noticed that Sarah never put her hair behind her ears, she always kept it infront of her face. The other kids noticed too.

After lunch Dustin started to tutor Sarah. At first he didn't know what to do, he's never tutored before, especially not someone in Sarah's situation.

"So, uh, what do you know?" Dustin asked awkwardly.

"I know everything you know."

Dustin sighed, "Ok, don't be so vague."

"Sorry, I um, I've attended school and learned everything you have learned. I've just never written it down."

"Oh, how-how did you um...attend school?"

"I can see all of you in the Upside Down, you just can't communicate with."

"Wow, that must've been really hard."

Sarah looked down at the floor uncomfortably, "Uh yeah, can we um, focus on schoolwork?"

Dustin realized that he must've made Sarah feel really uncomfortable and immediately felt bad. "Oh, yeah, sorry. Um, let's start with math. So you know the equations with variables?" Sarah nodded, "We'll be doing that equation, but it's mixed up so we have to order it. Does that make sense?"

"I think so."

"Ok, here I'll write some examples on a piece of paper and we can practice. Let's start easy, $3x + 2y = 15$."

Sarah looked at the equation for a moment, then pushed her hair behind her ear and pointed at the equation, "First you'd add 3x to fifteen so that the equation would be $2y = 3x + 15$, right?"

Dustin didn't say anything, Since he had seen Sarah her hair had always covered her face, but she just pulled it back, exposing her face. She was beautiful, she had a soft, pale complexion and faint freckles, her eyes were a mix between blue and green. Dustin never realized how capturing her face was, everything about her was amazing, from golden blonde hair, to her dainty fingers. Dustin knew she was strong, every muscle in her body was toned, but she moved so fairly, she could be a fairy. The way her mouth moved when she thought gave Dustin butterflies and he could tell that her nose would crinkle perfectly if she smiled. Even when she didn't smile, she seemed so wise, so thoughtful. Dustin couldn't begin to imagine what she'd been through, but she came out of it like an angel.

When Dustin didn't answer Sarah looked up at him. She didn't realize how close they were sitting together, their faces were inches apart. She looked into his eyes, something happened inside her gut, she didn't know what, it was warm and strange. She noticed how bright his eyes were, she'd never payed much attention to his face.

"Um, is that how I do the equation?"

Dustin took in a breath and looked over at the equation, backing up a little, "Uh, yeah, yeah, thats right. Let's keep working."

6. Merry Christmas, Happy New Years

"Merry Christmas!" A flashlight shone brightly in Sarah's face, making her eyes crinkle together. "Get up!"

Sarah was used to getting up early, she'd never slept longer than the sunrise, but it wasn't the sunrise, it was much earlier than that. Sarah rubbed her face, "El, what are you doing?"

"It's Christmas! My second Christmas ever and your first in a long time."

"What time is it?"

Eleven shrugged, "Like four?"

Sarah loudly whined and smashed her head farther into her pillow, "Eleven if I hate emotions right now I would hate you."

"But you don't, so get up! We're going to the Wheeler's to open presents."

"We're opening presents at four am?"

"Well….no, we're opening presents at nine am. But I woke up and can't sleep now."

Sarah slapped her forehead with the palm of her hand, "That's it."

You're tired, you'll fall asleep and wake up at a reasonable time.

Eleven's eyes started to drupe, she yawned, "Mouth breather." She called Sarah just before she fell back asleep, onto the floor. Sarah didn't care, not that she ever did, she just pulled up her blankets and fell back asleep, awaiting the coming sunrise.

A couple hours later the sun rose and along with it, Sarah. It was Christmas morning, there was a fresh blanket of snow outside and a sweet smell of pine inside. Sarah looked down at Eleven, all crumpled on the ground asleep. She'd hear a mouthful from Eleven when she woke up, but she knew she should.

Wake up.

Eleven's eyes fluttered open, she sat up, rubbed her eyes and yawned. Suddenly realizing what Sarah did, she pulled an angry face.

"You used your gift on me!"

"It was four am, I wanted to sleep."

"What time is it now?"

"Six."

"Ok, well you can't use your gift like that, you don't see me hurting you."

"I didn't hurt you, I told you to go to bed."

"I don't care! You can't use me like that!"

"Ok, I'm sorry. I don't understand feeling so I didn't realize that you'd get offended about it."

"Let's make a promise, we won't use our powers against each other unless it desperate."

Sarah nodded, "Promise."

"Good, go take a shower I'll try to find our best clothes, we're gonna leave at eight something if we can get Hop up."

"Do you need to shower?"

"Well yes, but you have more hair."

After three hours the three left for the Wheelers, barely making it on time. Eleven wore her usual, overalls and a grey sweater. Sarah wore Joyce's jeans that were too big and Joyce's old worn salmon colored sweater. Hop, of course, wore his sheriff's outfit.

Mrs. Wheeler opened the door and happily let them in. As they walked in the Byers, Sinclairs and Henderson's flooded them with hellos and merry Christmases. Sarah felt a bit overwhelmed with all

the people in the crowded space so she made her way to the living room. There she found and enormous green pine tree. It was covered in multicolored lights and ornaments, some classical some told the stories of the Wheeler family. What was almost as amazing as the tree was the Everest sized pile of presents underneath. They were covered in different wrapping papers with many different patterns, some were wrapped well or poorly, some had bows, some were in bags, but they were all amazing.

"Merry Christmas."

Sarah spun around, Dustin stood in the entrance of the room, he wore red pajamas that had a reindeer with a red nose on the front.

"Oh, um," Sarah cleared her throat, "I didn't know you were there. Am I not supposed to be here?"

"No, no, you're fine! I just saw you alone, thought you might like company."

Sarah tried to smile, it felt weird and unnatural. "Uh thanks. This is all so beautiful, I missed it."

Dustin walked up to Sarah and stood by her, looking at the tree, "You missed out, you could've been growing up with all of us. But then again, you probably would've stayed in the city."

Sarah thought for a moment, "I think I like it here more than the city. I can't feel, I've been stuck in a hell for most of my life, but there's something...nice, about being here."

Dustin's heart skipped a beat, he wanted to do something, his hand reached up, to hug her? To put it around her shoulder? He didn't know, but he stopped himself half way, she would just reject him like every other girl.

He pulled a smile, it was hard, "Glad you like it here. We should join everyone else."

Sarah nodded. The two joined everyone, they were eating breakfast. It was a banquet of food, fruits, bacon, eggs, sausage, pancakes, eggos, muffins, Sarah had never seen so much food together before.

She piled up her plate, or at least she thought she did, she just got a couple fruits, a bit of bacon and a pancake. Sarah found that she wasn't a fan of eggos.

When Dustin came back to Mike, Will, Lucas, Max and Eleven they were all giving him "the look."

"What?" Dustin asked as he shoved a pancake in his mouth.

"What? What do you mean what?" Lucas said, quite exasperated, "You and Sarah, alone."

"I don't know what you mean."

Max rolled her eyes, "Do not play dumb Dustin, you and Sarah were alone, you two have been hitting it off since day one. You have a crush on her!"

Dustin turned red, "I do not!"

Will smiled, "Yes you do!"

Dustin covered his face with his hand, "You've got to be shitting me, guys no. I don't!"

"Mhm," Max said smirking, "Keep telling yourself that."

"Let's open presents!" Holly yelled, "I want presents!"

"Ok, ok," Mrs. Wheeler said, "Everyone let's go to the kitchen, we're gonna open presents."

They all gathered in the living room, covering the couches and the floor. They all started passing out presents, the boys were screaming about comic books or some action figure, Holly and Erica got dolls, Nancy got clothes and make up, the adults got adult thing like pots and catalogs. Max, Sarah and Eleven didn't really get anything besides money and candy.

"Here, Sarah, this is from all of us." Dustin handed the biggest box to Sarah.

"Oh, um, thank you. I didn't get you anything, I didn't know."

"It's ok honey, just open it." Joyce said.

Sarah ripped through the wrapping paper and opened the big box. Inside she found clothes, nice new clothes, and school supplies. Again a strange warm feeling went through her stomach.

"Thank you guys." She said as she felt the clothes.

Thank you so much.

It was the only way she could sound sincere, some people looked really confused, they heard her voice in her head. Sarah realized that not everyone knew the secret, so she just played along with those who did know and pretended not to hear anything.

"Of course hun." Joyce said, "All the kids pitched in a little to help out."

"That's really kind, If I ever get my emotions back I'll be sure to thank you all properly."

There was a moment of silence, everyone sort of smiled awkwardly at each other. Nancy broke the silence, "Well there are two gifts left!" One for Max and one for Eleven. The two girls also got clothes, from Lucas and Mike, they had paid attention to what to what the girls liked when they went shopping.

After opening gifts the kids spent the day hanging out while the adults talked. Sarah, Max and Eleven changed their clothes. Sarah changed into the white sweater with a rainbow stripe across the chest arms, the high waisted jeans and the white and black adidas. Eleven still wore her overalls, but sported a christmas sweater and Max wore a green sweater, just different from her usual yellow.

All the families didn't get back together until New Years Eve. This night Sarah found out that she was supposed to stay up until twelve am because it was a new year. The adults drank champagne and talk about resolutions. They kicked the kids out to Mike's room, apparently they were "immature."

"So what's the point of New Year? Christmas is about the birth of Christ, Thanksgiving is about pioneers, what New Years about?" Sarah asked.

"Well it's about new beginnings, it's the end of 1985 and the start of 1986. People make resolutions, goals for the next year and it's all kind of like a celebrity thing I guess." Will explained.

"Are there any good traditions or is it just...dumb?"

"Well people kiss on New Years." Lucas said.

Sarah's eyes widened, "They do what?"

"Ignore it," Max said, "He's being dumb."

"But you're going to kiss Lucas at midnight." Mike teased.

"Piss off!" Max says, "You're gonna kiss Eleven."

Sarah's brow furrowed and she looked very confused, "Do I need to leave or…?"

"We'll join you." Will said, Dustin nodded in agreement.

"No, no, stay." Eleven said, "It's your first New Years in nine years. We'll have fun."

"Are you drunk?" Dustin asked.

"No!"

"Oh gosh, Mike if you got your girlfriend drunk, I swear you're screwed."

Mike's eyes squinted in anger, "She's not drunk, you're just jealous that you don't have a girlfriend for new years!"

"Jealous? Jealous of what your lip sucking? No way!"

"Hey, boneheads." Max interrupted, "While you ladies keep in cat fighting, the countdown is starting."

Sarah heard it, the adults downstairs chanting.

NINE

Eleven and Max held Lucas and Mike's hand.

EIGHT

They leaned their heads on their shoulders.

SEVEN

The kids joined the chanting.

SIX

Sarah suddenly realized she didn't really know what the chanting was for.

FIVE

It must be a countdown to the new year.

FOUR

Sarah, Will and Dustin exchange awkward looks.

THREE

Does the changing of the years hurt?

TWO

Probably not, she'd gone through many years.

ONE!

At the count of one, Mike, Eleven, Lucas and Max kissed. Sarah and Will looked at the floor, but Dustin stared at Sarah, she was so beautiful. She fiddled with her long hair, would she ever cut it? Maybe.

"Happy New Years." Dustin said in his head, "Here's to, hopefully, a

chance."

Sarah turned her head, what had Dustin meant by a chance?

7. First Day Of School

"First day of school! Get up, Get up!" Sarah awoke to another flashlight to her face.

"Eleven, stop with the flashlight. What time is it?" Sarah covered her eyes with her elbow.

"Two minutes before sunrise."

"Of course, what time is school?"

"School starts at eight. We have a couple hours."

Sarah yawned, "Alright, I'm going to take a shower and get some breakfast."

"Ok, when you're done I'll help you get your stuff in order."

Sarah hopped into the shower, it was much easier to wash her hair now. Getting ready had become so easy and comfortable. Sarah was beginning to feel safe again, she had friends and a family, now she was going to school like a normal girl. It was exciting, but Sarah wished most of all that she'd have emotions. She could tell that everyone around her felt a little awkward, she could tell that she didn't appreciate everything as much as she could've. But the doctor said her feeling could return and she was determined to get them back.

After she got ready Eleven helped her organize her school work and gave her a prep of what high school was like. Luckily for them Hawkins was a small town, so the high school was about the same size as the middle school, and the elementary school really. The only thing different was a bus. Most kids rode the bus to high school, some to middle school and hardly any to elementary. Sarah didn't care though, she was free, and she was getting a real life.

Sarah anxiously awaited the bus, just to find that it was smelly, old and a gross color if yellow. On the bus were a couple kids she didn't recognize, but she expected more.

"Where is everyone?" Sarah asked looking around.

"Shh, not so loud." Eleven said, "Looking around the bus, she knew kids would be listening. She and Sarah sat in a seat near the back, "There are multiple stops, the next stop will be the one that Mike, Lucas and Dustin. After that there will be a stop, Max's, and then the stop after that will be Will's."

The bus stopped and Mike, Lucas and Dustin were the first to step on. Dustin saw Eleven sitting in the back like usual, but she was sitting next to someone new. It was a girl, she had golden blonde straight hair cut short, just above her shoulders, it framed her face and gracefully moved as she did. Her hair was parted to the side and she had side bangs, but the flowed into her frame making the bangs more hidden, mysterious, beautiful.

Dustin sat across from the girls and suddenly it clicked, "Sarah?" He said completely disbelievingly.

Sarah blushed and reached up to fiddle with her hair, "Yeah."

"You cut your hair."

Sarah's face turned to a deep crimson, "Yeah, I, um, got bored of long hair. Dad got me an appointment last night."

"You look...great."

The bus stopped.

"Ok, scooch over mr. In-Love," Mike said, "You too Sarah."

Sarah scrunched her face, "Why?"

Lucas rolled his eyes, "They do this everyday, Mike sits across from El and when we get to Max's stop, they sit next to each other."

"I heard my name." Max walked up and sat by Lucas, "Sarah? New cut? It's cute."

"Thanks."

"Hey, move please?" Mike asked, annoyed.

Sarah reluctantly got up, but sitting next to Dustin wasn't so bad. Once the bus stopped each student got off, there Sarah found a lot more kids than she anticipated. She immediately got separated from her friends. She knew she should be terrified, new place, new world, but she wasn't, of course.

"Hey." A young boy with curly brown hair said, he was taller than Sarah and his hair was like Dustin's, but it wasn't as big and not quite as curly.

She wasn't exactly sure how to reply, "Um, hi."

"Are you lost?"

"Kind of, I was with some people, but I got lost…"

The boy smiled, "That's ok I'll help you." He reached out a hand, "My name is Troy, Troy Harrington."

Sarah shook his hand, "I'm Sarah, Sarah Hopper."

Troy's eyes widened, "You're the sheriff's daughter, the one who went missing."

Sarah grew red with embarrassment, "Um, yeah."

"Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to-you seem kind of-uh."

"Oh no,, when I went missing it was, uh traumatic. A lot of things happened, including the loss of my ability to feel."

Troy looked at the ground, "Oh, I'm so sorry."

"It's ok, the doctor said it'll come back to me, it'll just take time."

"That's good, but hey, you clean up nice."

Sarah looked down at her outfit, she was wearing the baggy striped dress shirt, black jeans and her adidas. "Thank you."

"Yeah. Hey do you want me to help you find your next class?"

"Yes please, I have biology."

"Right this way."

As Sarah walked away with Troy; Dustin, Eleven, Lucas, Will, Mike and Max followed from the distance. Dustin's heart sunk a little.

Eleven rubbed his back, "Don't worry, she won't become a bully. She just got stuck in the wrong spot."

Dustin shrugged Eleven away, "Who said I cared anyway?" Dustin then stormed off to his first class, biology.

In biology Sarah and Dustin sat next to each other, which made him extremely happy. In that class their teacher introduced Sarah , earning her a lot of strange looks. Then they worked on an assignment about cells, Sarah was a fast learner and with the help of Dustin she learned the difference between prokaryotic and eukaryotic faster than most of the other students.

After biology the day flew by and before she knew it, it was lunch break. Hopper packed a lunch in Sarah's pack and as she headed to meet her group for lunch she was interrupted.

"Hey Sarah!" Troy waved Sarah down, "Come eat with us!"

Sarah looked over at Eleven, Dustin, Mike, Will, Max and Lucas, they were all looking at her, expecting her to come. She then looked over at Troy and his group, her dad had said to meet new people, try to be normal. So she headed over and ate with Troy. This time Eleven was heartbroken, granted Sarah didn't know all the crap he had given them throughout their lives. Couldn't she tell that he was a bad person just by looking at him? Apparently not.

Just like the first half of the day, the second half flew by just as fast. Sarah's new backpack was already full of homework and projects, but she didn't care. She felt so normal, it was amazing. As Sarah walked towards the bus, hands holding her backpack straps she heard some very concerning things."

"Hey look it's toothless, but toothless, you're teeth grew in? How much money did your momma spend to make you look like plastic?"

This voice sort of sounded like Troy.

"No, he's pretending to be the tooth fairy," This voice was different, but still familiar. "He just steels them from under pillows and sticks them in his mouth."

"Ew, but what about you frog face? What do you and you're freaky psycho girlfriend do when you're alone? Or what about you midnight? You and your man-girlfriend must be pretty crazy."

"You know what, piss off?" It was Will.

"What are you going to do about it zombie boy? Die and come back to life?"

"Troy?"

Troy whipped around, "Oh hey Sarah."

"What are you doing?"

"Oh, you know, just messing with the losers of the school."

"Losers?"

"Yeah, you know, toothless, frog face, psycho freak, midnight, man girl and zombie boy."

"Why are you being mean to them?"

"Because they're losers, duh."

"No, they're my friends and El-Jane is my sister."

Troy's eyes widened, "You're *friends* with them?! Are you a loser too?"

Sarah paused, she didn't understand why Troy was being such a piece of shit, "Yes, I am. I'd rather be a loser than be you."

Sarah then walked past Troy, butting him with her shoulder and walked with her friends to the bus. As they walked Dustin felt an immense pride, Sarah chose him over a cool kid, the coolest kid. Even if she had chosen him along with many others, he still chose

him.

8. Smiles

The next day at school Sarah finally understood why all her friends called Troy and his gang of bullies so awful, she got a whole bully moment from him.

"Hey look it's the freak." Troy said as Sarah walked towards the bus after school, "You know I thought you were kinda cute when I first met you, turns out you're a loser, a loser like you're boyfriends toothless. Are you in love with toothless? Are you in love with a freak?"

"In...love?" Sarah asked.

Troy laughed, "Oh that's right, you can't feel. You're the freak that can't feel. I know your name, you're the feeless freak. So feeless freak how is it with your boyfriend? I'm sure he loves talking to you when you talk and you sound like you hate him. Ew, do you kiss him with his fake teeth? I'm sure it feels so weird, does he ever take them out?"

Sarah didn't know how to feel, what he was saying was horrible and she wanted more than anything to feel something, anger, sadness, hurt, but all she felt was the cold emptiness inside her.

"Hey, Troy what are you doing?" Dustin walked up behind Sarah.

"Oh look, toothless, coming to get his freak girlfriend. Don't worry, she's just as freakish as usual."

"You know what you can piss off Troy."

Troy raised his hands, "Whoa, toothless grew some balls. What are gonna do? Steal my teeth?"

"You know what Troy I am sick and tired of your constant bullying. You have made my life and the lives of those I care about such a hell with your constant dickish bullying. Why can't you just be happy with being a good person. What is so wrong in your life that you feel the need to hurt people? Especially Sarah, at four years old she was kidnapped, now, nine years later she's back and you feel like bullying

is the best choice? Just screw off Troy, we're done with you."

Dustin then put his hand on the square of Sarah's back, "Come on." and he lead her to the bus. Leaving Troy and his gang of miscreants standing dumb struck.

As they walked Sarah smiled, a huge genuine smile. A smile of joy and pride, her stomach was filled with warmth and it didn't go away. The emptiness inside her felt smaller and the cold was gone. Sarah's eyes widened, she felt something, she actually felt something.

Everyone was talking, not noticing Sarah's awestruck face, "Dustin." No answer, "Dustin." He kept talking to Lucas, "Dustin!"

This time he looked at Sarah, "What?"

Sarah tried to say something, but she couldn't, she just smiled. Dustin grew worried, really worried, his full focus was on Sarah now. "What is it, Sarah? Are you ok? What's wrong?"

Sarah shook her head, "Nothing's wrong, I...I can feel…"

Dustin's eyes widened, "You can-you can feel?"

Sarah's smile widened and she nodded, "Not, everything, right now I only feel happiness and pride, I think, but it's a start. I can feel!"

"You can what?" Eleven had heard Sarah. "Sarah are you lying?"

Sarah shook her head, her chest was heaving, she found it hard to breath, she was overwhelmed with this feeling. She placed her hand on her chest, which worried everyone.

"Sarah?" Max asked, "Are you ok?

"This-This is really overwhelming."

"Are you sure you're ok?" Dustin asked in the most worried tone."

Still heaving, hand still on chest, Sarah smiled, "Yeah, yeah I'm amazing."

Max, Lucas, Mike, Will and Dustin all missed their stops so they could go with Sarah and Eleven to the station. Sarah was bubbling, she couldn't contain her joy. She was laughing and smiling at practically everything. Dustin showered her with his dumb humor causing her to often stop walking so she could catch her breath.

They arrived to the station to find Hop fighting with Flo, as usual. Something about smoking and it was a hobby, he was on break, blah blah blah. The kids silently waited by the door until Hop noticed them.

"Kids, what are you doing here?" Hop asked once he realized they were there, "Where's Sarah?"

The kids each looked at each other, they stepped apart, revealing Sarah who had the biggest smile in the world.

Hop was confused, "What's going on?"

Sarah's smile grew, "Dad...Dad I can feel."

Hop's face paled, "What?"

"I can feel, only happiness right now, but it's working, feelings are returning. It took three weeks to feel happiness, soon I'll feel everything."

Hop didn't say anything, he didn't move, he just stood and stared. Sarah didn't know what to do, she just stood there, she thought he would be happy too. Was he not? Finally Hop walked up to Sarah, tears lined his eyes. He hugged Sarah, so tight, she lost her breath. When he let go Sarah found her shoulder wet, covered in tears.

"So, you're happy?" Sarah asked.

Hop laughed, wiping his tears away, "Yes, yes Sarah I'm so happy."

Sarah's smile returned, making her face glow in a way it never had before, not even when she was a child.

Hop stopped smiling, "Look, uh, Sarah, someone wants to visit you."

Sarah's face scrunched, "Who?"

"Err, you're mother."

Sarah stopped smiling, the cold and empty was back, she wasn't happy, "No."

"Sarah-"

"No!" Sarah smacked her hand on a desk.

Hop almost did the same, but he held himself back. Instead he rubbed his brow with one hand, "Sarah, I know, I know you don't want to see her, but don't you get it? She's your mother, she can get a lawsuit on me and take you away from me forever. If you don't see her she will do just that, please, just please see her."

Sarah looked at the ground and inhaled sharply, then looked up at Hop, "Fine, she gets an hour."

Hop nodded, "She'll be here next Saturday."

"I'll see you at home."